The Universal Concern of Saints in Communion,

REPRESENTED IN A

SERMON,

The Substance of which was delivered to the Church, Meeting near *Devonshire-Square.*

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

Rev. Mr. WALTER RICHARDS,

To the Pastoral-Office,

AND OF

Messrs. *J. Tomkins*, *T. Cooke* and *G. Wilkinson*,

To the Office of Deacons,

DECEMBER 14, 1762.

By *BENJAMIN WALLIN.*

LONDON:

Printed for the AUTHOR, and sold by J. BUCKLAND, and T. FIELD, in *Pater-Noster-Row*; J. JOHNSON, and E. GARDINER, in *Gracechurch-Street.*

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

CHURCH of CHRIST, meeting near *Devonſhire-Square*,

AND TO

All at whoſe Deſire the enſuing Diſcourſe is publiſhed.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

PEACE to the Brethren is the Wiſh of an inſpired Apoſtle, in which all true Chriſtians ſhould heartily join; but he that purſues it will find that this ineſtimable Bleſſing, more precious than Gold, is not to be maintained, in the preſent State, without the Self-Denial required in the Goſpel.

THIS Sermon comes *late* and *alone*, no leſs contrary to my own Inclination, than to the well known Cuſtom on the like Occaſion; yet, I hope, it will prove a ſeaſonable Word of Advice; for daily Experience ſhews the loud Call there is to conſider and apply the Subject in Hand. This is the Plan on which we may expect the Kingdom of CHRIST to flouriſh among us; nor will any thing ſhort of this Spirit and Conduct convince the World that we are Diſciples, or promote that

that Holineſs without which no Man ſhall ſee the Lord. How beautiful are the Children of God; when, laying aſide private and ſelfiſh Views, in Lowlineſs of Mind, they each eſteem other better than themſelves: and with brotherly Love, in Honour prefer one another!

To promote this Lovely and Chriſtian Behaviour, the following Diſcourſe was compoſed, when I had Reaſon to think myſelf ſafe from being intreated to publiſh; and this was the more agreeable, on Account of the imperfect Manner in which I was obliged to deliver it; for the Time being greatly elapſed before I entred on my Branch of the Service, it was not convenient to enlarge on ſeveral Points, as intended.

If, under a Divine-Bleſſing, my Attempt ſhould ſucceed to improve any, ſo as to render them more uſeful in the Church, and to ſpread the Savour of vital Religion, your Requeſt will anſwer a valuable End, God will be glorified, and it will be the Joy of, *Sirs*,

Your affectionate,
tho' unworthy Servant in
the Lord,
BENJAMIN WALLIN.

Porter's Buildings, Southwark, January 10, 1763.

THE
Univerſal Concern
OF
SAINTS in COMMUNION.

THE Part aſſigned me in the preſent Solemnity, is to give a ſeaſonable Word of Advice to this Chriſtian Church, who have this Day before God, and us, the Angels alſo bearing Witneſs, ſet apart choſen Perſons to Office among them, particularly our beloved Brother, now their acknowledged Paſtor and Overſeer in the Lord.

My Addreſs is to you, Beloved, on a joyful Occaſion, and that your Joy may remain, under a Divine Bleſſing on the Relation you ſtand in to each other, I ſhall remind you of ſome Things which I apprehend needful as a Means conducing to this deſirable End, not doubting your Readineſs to apply what is agreeable to the Oracles of Truth.

What I ſhall recommend is laid up in that copious Direction of the inſpired Apoſtle, which is written.

ROMANS xiv. 19.

Follow after the Things which make for Peace, and Things wherewith one may edify another.

FOR Brevity's Sake, I touch not on the particular Occaſion of this Exhortation, and for the ſame Reaſon omit the former Part of the Verſe. The Words, you ſee, are directed to the Church at *Rome*: A Place once famous for the Purity and Power of the Goſpel; but alas, now, and for Ages paſt, the Seat of Antichriſt, and many Abominations, from whence Multitudes are ſeduced in all Parts of the World, our own Nation not excepted: If we think ourſelves ſecure from the Attempts of Popiſh Emiſſaries, I fear we ſhall be greatly miſtaken; for the Errors and Diſorders that abound among us are probably more owing to the Subtlety of theſe Men in Diſguiſe than is generally imagined; however, had the Profeſſors at *Rome* cloſely adhered to this Rule, that Church had never fallen from her primitive Glory.

I ſhall take it for granted that you will not ſcruple to allow that the Spirit and Conduct demanded in the Text becomes the Diſciples of Chriſt in every Age and Place, and

and that you are willing to conform yourſelves to it as of univerſal Obligation, and as of the utmoſt Importance in the Houſe of God.

The Truth before us is plainly *this*, namely, that it becomes the Faithful united in a Church-State, to follow the Things which make for Peace, and Things wherewith one may edify another: This Truth I ſhall endeavour to open and ſet before you with a Freedom ſuited to the occaſional Service in which I am engaged; let me therefore beſeech your ſerious Attention, while I briefly conſider the Duty enjoined, remind you of thoſe Things which are to be followed, in Order to obtain the Ends propoſed, and then mention a few Motives to animate each Individual in this glorious Purſuit. And,

Firſt, The Text in general is a Duty enjoined; in which you may obſerve the Objects, the Act, and the Extent of the Command.

I. The Objects; and they are Peace and mutual Edification; the one in order to the other; for unleſs Peace is maintained, Believers cannot edify each other, however regularly joined in Church-Communion. Peace is a comprehenſive Term, and is uſed to expreſs any happy State, and indeed it is ſometimes applied to that which is enjoyed

by the Saints in Heaven; but in this Place the Apoſtle plainly intends the Peace of the Church, or Peace among Brethren; and it ſhould be noted that this Exhortation is to a relative Duty by which each Chriſtian is called upon to act with a View, not ſo much to *himſelf* as to his *Fellow* and the *Community* to which he belongs. Peace ſtands oppoſed to any Offence, Grief, or Stumbling, which too often ariſe through Contentions, Animoſities and Diviſions from various Cauſes whereby Trouble enſueth, and the Edification of the Saints is prevented; it carries in it Harmony and Union, which promote the Tranquility of a Church, and the Satisfaction of every Member; and, in one Word, this Direction is parallel with that in *Epheſ.* iv. 3. where the Apoſtle beſeeches the Diſciples to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.*

The other Object preſented in the Text is that of mutual Edification; that *one may edify another.* A Church you know is compared to an *Houſe*, and Believers are ſtiled *God's Building*; they are ‡ to be built up a *ſpiritual Houſe*, and each to be advanced in Knowledge and Faith by Means of Communion. The Edification of a Church natu-

rally

* 1 Cor. iii. 9. ‡ 1 Peter, xi. 5.

rally riſeth in Proportion to the Growth of them who compoſe it, and accordingly the Increaſe of each particular Member is to be purſued for the good of the whole: So then the great Work to be carried on in the Houſe of God is EDIFICATION*, in which every One is concerned, and ſhould be employed in Reſpect of Another, as we ſhall preſently ſee: This is the genuine and noble Spirit of Chriſtian-Communion! Every Man, contrary to the Maxims of this World, laying aſide all private and ſiniſter Views, and, as it were, forſaking himſelf, under the Influence of divine Love; is † preferring and ſeeking the Good of his Brother: In all appearance this is what ſome Profeſſors do not underſtand; but, thus we are directed, Chap. xv. 2. Every one to *pleaſe his Neighbour for his Good to Edification*, and that this muſt be done at the Expence of Self-Denial is plain from the Context in which we are bid not to pleaſe ourſelves, and the Example of Chriſt is urged as a Motive, who pleaſed not himſelf, but bore the Reproach for his People; this diſintereſted Labour of the Saints indeed is not *carnal* but tru-

* Jude xx.

† (Rom. xii. 10. Phillipians xi. 4. compared)

truly *good* Policy, for the Obligation being reciprocal, the Advantage is mutual, and where this Spirit ſincerely and univerſally prevails, great is the Comfort and Glory of a Chriſtian Society! Thus in Chriſt ‖ *all the Building fitly framed together groweth unto an Holy Temple in the Lord.* May you, my Friends, after this manner, wiſely build up each other that * ye alſo in him may be builded together for an Habitation of God thro' the Spirit. To proceed,

II. The Text demands our Purſuit of the Things which conduce to theſe great and deſireable Ends: *Follow after the Things which make for Peace*, &c. Thus are you to be active in the Houſe of the Lord, and it will appear on Reflection that this includes,

1. That theſe things are the *Aim* and *Scope* of your Conduct. Some by their behaviour in the Church of Chriſt are ſeeking themſelves, they look every Man on his own things, and not on the things of others, contrary to the Apoſtle's Advice, but he, who in any tolerable Senſe or Degree comes up to this Exhortation, hath at leaſt ſincerely in View the Peace of the Church, and the Edification of his Brother; this is the Drift of his

‖ Epheſ. xi. 21. * Ver. 22.

his Conduct, and his Conſcience bears witneſs that this is his real Deſign and earneſt Deſire. Again,

2. It carrieth in it *Diligence* and *Labour*. To follow a thing is to perſue it with our utmoſt Ability; * the Alluſion is to a Racer who in View of the Mark is eager, and preſſeth forward with all his Strength that he may reach the Goal, and lay hold of the Prize; in like manner he that followeth after theſe things, as the Apoſtle directs, perſues them with Vigour. Sloth is inconſiſtent with the Injunction before us, as appears from (*Heb.* vi. 12.) *Be not ſlothful, but Followers of them who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promiſes.* A Man that complieth with this Exhortation muſt not be lukewarm and inactive; he muſt watch and pray and ſtrive, if by any Means he may attain the End ſet before him. And, further,

3. Conſtancy and Perſeverance are contained in the Phraſe, and thus it ſtands oppoſed

* Διώκωμεν. The Word uſed here ſignifieth the moſt eager, inceſſant and unwearied Purſuit, as that of a Perſecutor, who followeth his Prey and will not give out; thus the Apoſtle himſelf in the Time of his Ignorance and Sanguine Oppoſition to Jeſus, when he breathed out threatning and ſlaughter againſt his Diſciples. See Stokius, Leigh's critic. ſacra, &c.

poſed to Fickleneſs and Apoſtacy. He that followeth gives himſelf to the perſuit; it is the buſineſs of his Life, nor will he decline or reſt ſhort of obtaining the Object purſued, and accordingly we find the Apoſtle adds to the laſt quoted Paſſage; *and we deſire that every one of you do ſhew the ſame Diligence in full Aſſurance of Hope unto the End.* Some run well for a Seaſon, till a Temptation ariſeth by which they are offended, then they diſcover the Pride and Vanity of their Minds, diſturb the Peace of the Church, and care not how much their Brother is grieved; but the Man who conforms to this Direction will endure and proſecute his Aim to the End. This it is to follow the Things that make for Peace, and wherewith one may edify another; it is to ſet theſe things before us as a Mark, and make them the Scope and End of our Conduct, to preſs after them to the utmoſt of our Power, and ſteadily to perſevere therein; and he that is thus ſincerely engaged will deprecate and avoid every Occaſion of Trouble, he will rather ſuffer wrong than be turned aſide, and will by no Means connive at, much leſs be concerned in any Meaſures that endanger the Peace of Society, or that he apprehends will juſtly offend the leaſt of his Brethren. But further,

III. Note

III. Note the Extent of this Exhortation: It is univerſal, and layeth its Command on each Individual. This hath already been hinted, and calls for peculiar Attention, that no one may think himſelf excuſed from the Labour and Self-denial of this important Purſuit; there are Duties in the Houſe of God which are ſpecial and incumbent only on Perſons of diſtinguiſhed Talents or Office, which are not required of others; there are alſo Duties of general concern which depend on Circumſtances, and are only occaſional; but the Advice in our Text is given to every Member of the Church, Miniſters and People, younger and elder, rich and poor, weak and ſtrong; here is no Exception as to Perſon, no, nor of Time or Circumſtances, in one Reſpect or another; each one at all Times, in every Part of his Conduct, and in whatever Condition himſelf or the Church may be, is called upon to *follow the things which make for Peace and wherewith one may edify another.*

This is the Duty injoined; that every Member of a Chriſtian Church ſhould ſincerely aim, and ſtudiouſly endeavour, at all Times, and in every Station, to the End of his Life, after the things which make for the public Peace and the Edification of his

Neighbour. O what glorious Times would be ſeen, if this was the univerſal Practice of nominal Chriſtians! Is it not, my Friend, the Language of your Heart?—Lord enable me thus to perſue! As a means of aſſiſting your Endeavours, I ſhall go on, as propoſed.

Secondly, To remind you of ſome things you are to purſue in Order to Peace and mutual Advantage: This opens a Proſpect ſpacious indeed! It contains the whole of practical Godlineſs. I can only touch on the principal Articles which are to be regarded in ſocial Religion as tending to theſe glorious Ends, and I think it may be uſeful to lead your Thoughts on this Capital-Head of Diſcourſe under a twofold Diviſion; Namely,

I, As it relates to the Body in general. And,

II. As it hath a peculiar Regard to the Officers of the Church in particular. And,

I. It is not impertinent, and I hope will be uſeful, my Brethren, to put you in Mind of thoſe things which make for Peace in your general Deportment together in

in the Houſe of God. Indeed the Carriage of a People towards their Miniſter depends much on their Behaviour one among another; a mutual good Conduct in this Reſpect among the People of God will naturally preſerve and promote a decent Eſteem for their Guides; and now, Beloved, the following things are greatly conducive, and in ſome Degree, needful to the Peace and Edification of a Chriſtian Community.

1. A ſincere and mutual Affection, Charity edifieth: Love is the leading Grace, the *Primum Mobile*, or grand Spring of Action in this ſpiritual Body, without which it is dead. * *Faith works by Love.* The Apoſtle in a fine Deſcription of the Church, comparing it to the natural Body, which being fitly joined together from the Head in its ſeveral Parts, each ſupplieth according to its Meaſure to the Increaſe of the whole, concludes his Account with obſerving, that all this is § *unto the edifying of itſelf in Love.* It is † by love the Saints ſerve one another; hence nothing is more frequently or earneſtly exhorted. ¶ *Let Brotherly Love continue.* Again, ‖ above all things have

* Gal. v. 6. § Epheſ. iv. 16. † Gal. v. 13.
¶ Heb. xiii. 1. ‖ 1 Pet. iv. 8.

fervent Charity among yourſelves; and further, [*Coloſ.* iii. 14] Above all things put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfection, *i. e.* as it may reaſonably be interpreted, of Peace and Edification. But Time would fail to rehearſe the many warm Exhortations to Love. My Brethren, if you would attain the End propoſed in the Text, you muſt * *provoke one another to Love and good Works.* The Pains and Self denial needful thereto will be too much for Fleſh and Blood without an undiſſembled and fervent mutual Affection, but where this truly ſubſiſts all things are eaſy, therefore cultivate Love: Your Miniſter will have cauſe to thank God when † *the Charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth.* Again,

2. Conformity in Judgment. § *Be of one Mind and live in Peace.* The one is needful to the other. It is written, that the primitive Chriſtians ‡ were of one Heart and one Soul; this was not only in Point of Affection, which engaged them to make a common Stock of their Subſtance, but alſo in Point of Judgment; they were unanimous in the Faith of God's Elect, for we are told, they ‖ continued ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtle's Doc-

* Heb. x. 24. † 2 Theſſ. i. 3. § 2 Cor. xiii. 11.
‡ Acts iv. 32. ‖ Chap. ii. 42.

Doctrine. Some plead that in ſocial Worſhip we have nothing to do with each others private Opinions, they decry all Creeds and Confeſſions, and reject, with Diſdain, every Pretence of enquiring into what they believe; they tell us that if men agree in the Form of Divine-Inſtitutions, if they maintain Church-Aſſemblies, if they bear their Proportion in the Expence of Divine-Service, and are morally ſober, nothing more is required; and indeed it would be very agreeable and uſeful, if Perſons related in Chriſtian Society were univerſally united and ſtedfaſt in theſe, but to make the Union of the Faithful conſiſt wholly, or chiefly in theſe things, is in a manner to exclude vital Religion from the Communion of Saints, and to introduce a wretched Formality, and a miſerable Jargon in the Houſe of the Lord; for on this Principle Men may externally join, whoſe Hearts are ſtrangely divided; they may neither adore the ſame Object, nor truſt in the ſame Saviour; while they ſeem to be one they in truth may be many, and oppoſite in Point of their Faith, and their Hope of Juſtification and Life everlaſting may be on a very different, yea, on a contrary Foundation; beſides, if this was the Caſe, how can it be the Duty of each to follow

low after the Advancement of his Brother in the Knowledge of Chriſt, or what Means or Opportunity could he have for purſuing the ſame as preſcribed in the Text? But Experience ſhews that nothing more tends to interrupt the Peace and Edification of a Church than the Members being differently minded concerning the eſſential Doctrines of their holy Profeſſion: Indeed we are commanded to *receive him that is weak in the Faith*. But this proves, that they, whom we receive, are to be in the Faith, *i. e.* ſuch who in the judgment of Charity, are real Diſciples of Chriſt, and who know and believe the Truths of the Goſpel, nor ſhould the right Hand of Fellowſhip be given to any but ſuch. In one word, the Peace commended in the Text is not like to ſubſiſt without this conformity in Judgment, reſpecting what is *eſſential* to Salvation, as well as to the Order of Communion. But further,

3. Another thing to be followed in order to Peace and Edification, is mutual Forbearance. There are many Occaſions for this on Account of remaining Infirmities and Weakneſs from which none are exempt, but eſpecially on account of the many different Sentiments which are found to take place in the Minds of God's People: A Variety of Opinions among

mong the Faithful conſiſt with their cordial Union in the Foundations of Chriſtianity, and in this State of Imperfection in Knowledge, it is ſcarcely poſſible to find a conſiderable Number of Believers of the ſame Mind in every Particular; indeed the more liable to differ in this Reſpect, the more we ſhould ſtrive to avoid it, for the leſs it prevails, the more ſecure is our Peace, and the greater Probability of ſucceeding in our Attempts, one to edify the other; yet Differences have been, are, and are to be expected among Chriſtians in Fellowſhip, which call for the mutual Exerciſe of Charity and Patience: The Context ſhews that you are not to judge or grieve one another on account of theſe things; and if you would attain the End of this Exhortation, Beloved, you muſt exerciſe a mutual Forbearance: And ſuffer me to add that this ſhould be the eſpecial Care of thoſe who excel in Knowledge, Experience, and Gifts; ſuch are liable to forget this Part of their Duty towards their Brethren, but * we *that are ſtrong ought to bear the Infirmities of the weak.* It is unworthy the Character of one long ſtanding and advanced in the Church to expect that he ſhould

* Rom. xv. 1.

ſhould always be indulged in his private Opinion, he ought rather to prove his ſuperior Talents by yielding to others where Peace is in Danger, for in this glorious Perſuit we are * *all to be ſubject one to another.* Again,

4. An impartial Behaviour is likewiſe of great Importance unto the Peace and Proſperity of a Church. You know the ſolemn Charge given by the Apoſtle to Timothy, that he would obſerve the things he had enjoined † *without preferring one before another*, and, ſaith he, *doing nothing by Partiality.* This Rule is to be obſerved by every Perſon in his Station in the Houſe of the Lord. Indeed, we are to ‡ prefer others before ourſelves, but not to prefer one before another; A peculiar Honour is due to one and to another according to his Rank, Capacity and Uſefulneſs, the rendering of which is not Partiality but needful, in order to Peace; to be partial is to act with Prejudice, § as the Word ſignifieth, it conſiſts in exceeding or coming ſhort of what a Brother is entitled to in his Station and Circumſtances thro' Prejudice *for* or *againſt* him, as when one Brother is deſpiſed, and another under the ſame Character

* 1 Pet. v. 5.
† 1 Tim. v. 21.
‡ Rom. xii. 10.
§ προκρίματος,

racter and Condition is honoured and careſſed, or when we are diligent to ſerve one Fellow Chriſtian, and at the ſame Time neglect another, who is equally worthy and in the like Neceſſity; now this Reſpect of Perſons is to be carefully avoided, as tending to Wrangling and Diſpute, according to the Expreſſion of the Apoſtle *James*, when he declares that the Wiſdom from above is without * Partiality, *i. e.* as you find in the Margin of ſome Copies, without *wrangling*, for this is the ſad Conſequence of being Partial; it creates Uneaſineſs, Jealouſies, Murmuring and Contention; an early Inſtance of which is to be ſeen † among the primitive Diſciples. Impartiality therefore is one thing to be followed in order to Peace, and I hope, my Brethren, as you deſire one may edify another, you will each endeavour to carry it with an even Hand. But, to proceed,

5. It greatly conduceth to theſe valuable Ends when each Member acts in his Place. Nothing is more needful to Peace and the mutual Profit of Chriſtians in Communion than Order. § The Apoſtle declares, that in the Church there are Diverſities of Gifts,

* ἀδιάκριτος, James iii. 17. † Acts vi. 1.
§ 1 Cor. xii.

Adminiſtrations and Operations, and again alluding to the natural Body obſerves, that this one Body hath many Members, and in another Place, he ſaith, ‡ *all Members have not the ſame Office.* So is Chriſt: In this ſpiritual Body, the Church, there are Acts peculiar to the paſtoral Office, and likewiſe thoſe that belong to the Office of a Deacon; there are alſo ſome things to be tranſacted, as Diſcipline in general, by the whole Corporation or Church gathered together, and in theſe Aſſemblies and Operations each one is more or leſs concerned according to his Station and Capacity; now it tends much to promote the Ends propoſed in our Text, when the Members of a Church intrude not the one on the other; but, proceeding in Order each in his Function, acts freely for the Good of the whole; by this means Peace is preſerved and the Increaſe of Individuals greatly promoted. And,

6. A ſtrict Adherence to the Word of God in all your Church Acts is another thing to be purſued. There are plain Rules laid down in many Caſes for the Proceedings of a Church which it were to be wiſhed each Brother in Communion made the Matter of his

‡ Rom, xii. 4.

his Study according to his Ability. Many unhappy Diſturbances have aroſe among Chriſtians which might have been prevented had they tranſacted their Affairs in the Manner preſcribed in the Goſpel: And let it be noted that this Obſervation is in no Particular of greater Importance than in Relation to private Contentions, which, as you have heard, are by no Means to be introduced to the Church till the Meaſures are taken by the Parties concerned, which the Lord hath commanded *; for want of attending to this, the Peace of many Communities have been broken, and not eaſily reſtored; but in ſome Inſtances, have ſeverely threatned, if not iſſued, in a total Diſſolution. Again,

7. Frequent Prayer and ſpiritual Conference is another excellent Means of attaining this bleſſed Deſign. A Means ſadly neglected among us! Such Opportunities, if carried on with Serioufneſs, Humility and Order, tend to promote Knowledge and Love, and greatly unite and edify the Children of God; and it is highly pleaſing to the Lord when they who fear him § in this Manner ſpeak often one to another. Moreover,

* Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17.
§ Mal. iii. 16.

8. In a Compliance with the Advice of the Text, it will be needful to maintain a becoming Behaviour in all Church-Aſſemblies. It was the Reſolution of the Pſalmiſt and the Direction of the Apoſtle to behave decently in the Houſe of God; and this is incumbent on all. Some indulge a light and airy Manner on thoſe ſolemn Occaſions for which they are to blame, * for *God is greatly to be feared, and to be had in Reverence in the Aſſemblies of his Saints.* Church-Aſſemblies are of Divine-Inſtitution, and honoured with the ſpecial Preſence of the Lord according to his Promiſe; this, together with the Character you bear, and the End for which you gather, demands a moſt ſerious and reverend Deportment: Nor is there any Superſtition in this: Indeed every Place is alike, but all Aſſemblies are not; nor doth Religion conſiſt in being indecent: When a People behave with a becoming Gravity in their Church-Meetings, one good Effect will be Order and Modeſty throughout their Debates, which tends to Peace and Edification, but a different Conduct will end in Confuſion. In one Word,

9. As

† Pſalm ci. 2. 1 Tim. iii. 15. compared

* Pſalm lxxxix. 7.

9. As you would attain theſe Ends, let each watch his own Heart, and look well to his Steps, and likewiſe bear his Part in the Inſpection of the Church, as required, that no one may ſlide, or Iniquity prevail. All this is included in that important Exhortation; *looking diligently † leſt any Man fail of the Grace of God, leſt any Root of Bitterneſs ſpringing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.*

Theſe, my Brethren, are the things you are to follow, in your general Conduct one among another: Namely, *Brotherly love*, Union in Judgment, mutual Forbearance, an impartial Conduct, that each one keep his Station, Reſpect to the Rule in all your Proceedings, frequent Prayer and ſpiritual Conference, Reverence in your Aſſemblies, and an holy Watchfulneſs. Now, let me beſeech you to regard theſe things, and you will find by the Bleſſing of God that they make for Peace, and will turn to your mutual Advantage. I now paſs on,

II. To remind you of thoſe things which are to be purſued in Reſpect to the Officers of the Church in particular, on which I am obliged to be brief; theſe you know conſiſt of two Orders; namely, Miniſters of the Word

† Heb. xii. 15.

Word, or ſuch who are inveſted with the paſtoral Office; and Deacons: You have this Day ſet apart Perſons in each of theſe Characters.

As to the Deacons, who are to ſerve Tables, two things are eſſential.

1. That you honour their Perſons. Deacons are Stewards, and, in ſome Reſpects, Guides in the Houſe of God, and tho' their Office is inferior to, and appointed for the Relief and Aſſiſtance of Goſpel Miniſters, it is truly honourable and the Peace and Edification of a Church depends much on their being duly reſpected. Again,

2. Let them uſe the Office to which you have called them, * as the Apoſtle directs; this carries in it a Caution not to invade their Province, and it demands a proper Submiſſion to them in what relates thereunto: It becomes you to admit them into your Houſes and Company as Occaſion requireth, to be ready to anſwer to their ſerious Queſtions, and hearken to their prudent Advice, giving them all reaſonable Satisfaction in thoſe Matters which lie within the Compaſs of their Office; you are likewiſe to aſſiſt them to your Power; and more eſpecially † by a free and gene-

* 1 Tim. iii. 10.

† Deacons indeed are to be an Example of Liberality to the Poor, for which Reaſon among others, a covetous

generous Contribution of your Subſtance, whereby they may be ſupplied for the Diſcharge of their Office. I ſay not that any are limited in their Beneficence to the Poor, but I may venture to affirm that no Pretence of private and perſonal Aſſiſtance will excuſe a Man from bearing his Proportion in filling the Hands of the Deacons, and it ſeems by this Appointment of the Lord, that it is agreeable to his Will, that the Bounty of his People in the Church ſhould be chiefly diſpoſed this Way; however, if theſe Servants of Chriſt are not properly reſpected in their Character, and furniſhed for their Work, it will greatly affect the public Tranquility.

But the Office of your Paſtor being ſtill higher, and of greater Moment, it may be expected that I ſhould ſpeak more Particular in Relation to him, yet here I muſt not enlarge; doubtleſs his Station renders your ſuitable Behaviour to him of the utmoſt Importance. A Paſtor is the principal Inſtrument of Edification, it muſt therefore be allowed that the things which are required in Reſpect of

a covetous Man is unfit to be preferred to this Honour in the Church, but they are not to furniſh the Tables of the Sanctuary out of their own proper Subſtance, but from the Churches Stock, the maintaining of which is abſolutely neceſſary to the Execution of their Office.

of ſuch fall within the Number, and that indeed they are to be ranked among the chief things which make for Peace, and wherewith one may edify another. Many are the Obligations on a People to their Miniſter, on which I cannot inſiſt: In general they contain every thing in your Power needful to comfort and aſſiſt him in the Work of the Lord. It may ſuffice that I briefly touch on three or four principal Points, in which the Peace of a Church is nearly concerned. And,

1. One thing to be followed in Reſpect of your Paſtor, to accompliſh theſe Ends, is his Credit among you. The Scriptures demand a * very high Eſteem for thoſe who are over you in the Lord for their Work's Sake, and truly their Office on many Accounts require it, and for no Reaſon more weighty than this, that the Proſperity of the Church is connected therewith.

You need not be told, that when once a Miniſter ſinks in his Character, the Peace of a Community is eaſily broke, Diſcontent and Diſorders enſue, and the Work of the Building is then interrupted, if not at a Stand: A ſorrowful Caſe indeed! He therefore, who with a good Underſtanding followeth the things which make for Peace, will be careful in

* 1 Theſſ. v. 13.

in Love to preſerve, and will labor to promote an Eſteem of his Paſtor, in his own Opinion, and in the Breaſt of others, and there are various things conduce to attain it, not now to be mentioned, but which will be eaſily apprehended, and as readily complied with by thoſe who have at Heart the Good of Jeruſalem.

A Perſon ſuſtaining this Office may forfeit his Character; he may turn out unworthy; and ſo unworthy as not to be endured, nor do I plead for any Connivance at real or habitual Evil in favour of a Goſpel Miniſter; his ſacred Office doth not in the leaſt extenuate, it rather aggravates his Crime, and the Conſequence of not bearing a proper and ſeaſonable Teſtimony againſt ſuch a Man's Sin is the reverſe of what the Apoſtle commends; the Leaven will ſpread to the troubling of the Church, and the defiling or ſeducing of many, * *for a righteous Man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled Fountain and a corrupt Spring.* May the Lord keep us from falling! But, the Credit of a ſerious and upright Servant of the Lord cannot be too much regarded. Nothing, my Friends, is to be more ſacred with you than your Miniſ-

E ter's

* Prov. xxv. 26

ter's Character; he will, like the reſt of his Brethren, if faithful, be ſubject to the Slanders and Reproaches of many; the malice of ſome and the weakneſs of others may lay you under a Temptation to ſlight him, be therefore on your Guard, diſcountenance all Inſinuations to his Prejudice, nor eaſily take up a Report againſt him which tends to undervalue his Perſon or Labours. In one Word, As you would compaſs the Deſign of this Exhortation, hearken to the Apoſtle's Advice; * having received our Brother in the Lord, endeavour by every honourable Method to hold him in high Reputation. Again,

2. Follow his Improvement and Succeſs. Theſe indeed are from that God, who alone giveth the Increaſe; yet, in the ordinary Courſe of the Divine-Diſpenſation they are to be obtained in the uſe of Means, and you may do many things towards your Miniſter's Improvement, and eſpecially a young Miniſter may obtain from his People much Aſſiſtance in a Variety of Ways; you may as opportunity ſerves, ſupply him with Books or other Conveniencies for Study, in want of which, on firſt ſetting out, ſome have been greatly at a loſs; to be early furniſhed with

* Phil. ii. 29

with ſuch Means is of peculiar Advantage, and a Chriſtian may have great reaſon to acknowledge himſelf well paid for this kind of Generoſity by the Bleſſing of God on the Diligence of his Paſtor. He may likewiſe be greatly edified by a Communication of your Experience and Knowledge in ſpiritual Matters; thoſe of you who have been long called into the Hope of the Goſpel may have met with many things, which will be profitable to your Miniſter to know, the great Apoſtle of the Gentiles himſelf deſired to be comforted this Way by the Romans, * *I long to ſee you———that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual Faith both of you and me.* A Method in which a Man may excel who hath ſcarce any other Gift to impart to his Paſtor, and thereby become greatly ſubſervient to the carrying on the Work of the Lord, and 'tis much to be deſired that theſe communications between Miniſters and their People were more frequent and free. It may alſo conduce to his viſible Succeſs if you are watchful and ready to encourage enquiring Souls whom you perceive awakened under his Miniſtry; Far be it to countenance any mean, carnal, or precipitant Step to induce Perſons to join a particular

* Rom. i. 11. 12.

Church; but ſure 'tis becoming to take Notice of thoſe who ſeem to be looking towards Zion, for Want of which, thro' prevailing Lukewarmneſs, there is Reaſon to apprehend that young Converts are often diſcouraged, at leaſt are turned aſide from attending where they are neglected; but, above all things you are to purſue his Improvement by earneſt and daily Supplications to the God of all Grace. * *You alſo helping together by Prayer for us.* This was the Practice of the Faithful of old; † *Pray for the Peace of, Jeruſalem.* I make no doubt but that our Brother, your Paſtor, is ready to addreſs you in the Words of the Apoſtle in the Cloſe of this Epiſtle, conſcious that this is his Heart's Deſire; § *I beſeech you, Brethren, for the Lord Jeſus Chriſt's ſake, and for the Love of the Spirit that ye ſtrive together with me in your Prayers to God for me.* And ſo ſay we all; ‡ *Brethren, pray for us.* Beloved, pray for your Miniſter; pray for him in your Cloſets, in your Families, and alſo together in the Houſe of God. And further,

3. Follow his Support or Maintenance, each ſetting an Example and ſtirring up the other to fulfill this reaſonable Appointment of the Lord. Among other excellent things your

* 2 Cor. i. 11.
§ Rom. xv. 30.
† Pſalm cxxii. 6.
‡ Heb. xiii. 18.

your Paſtor hath been told by way of Encouragement under the Difficulties and Labour of his Service, you know this is one; namely, that in a faithful Diſcharge of his Work, he is entitled to Honour, and that this includes an honourable Maintenance; let him not be deceived; unleſs he is thus provided for by you, he will not be duly honoured among you, your Hands will be ſlackened, and it will lay a Foundation for Trouble. If, thro' a Neglect in this Point a Miniſter is perplexed and rendered incapable of purſuing his Studies, one Means of Edification is loſt, to the Church; how then can a Man who witholds his Proportion towards this Work be ſaid to follow the things recommended in the Text? And let it be obſerved that this is not only what a few Perſons, comparatively rich, are to purſue, but it ſhould be endeavoured by all, for Want of attending to which, many Perſons are burthened, and ſome Churches decline. But once more,

4. Follow his Miniſtrations. Every preceding Article will be more or leſs affected by this: If you neglect his Miniſtrations, his Character, his Uſefullneſs, and conſequently the Means of his Support will be leſſened. No Practice more unreaſonable and prepoſterous, or more effectually ſubverſive of the Ends propoſed in the Text, than when the Mem-

Members of a Church desert the Ministry among them, the pernicious Consequences of indulging to this are more than can be told; I shall only say that if the Endeavours of a Pastor is the appointed Means of edifying his People, and who will refuse it, most certainly then they who habitually neglect to sit under him do not follow, but in Fact, such forsake a capital and necessary thing which makes for Peace, and wherewith one may edify another.

These are the things you are to pursue in respect of such who are in Office among you; you are to honour and assist them to the utmost of your Power, and especially the Credit, Improvement, Support, and Ministrations of your Pastor are to be diligently followed, as you would attain to the Peace set before you. It remains,

Thirdly. That I mention the Motives there are to animate each of you in this glorious Pursuit. And,

1. One Motive is this: It is the proper Business of every Man. Various are the Duties of Believers in Communion, according to their different Stations and Circumstances: Some are to give, and Some are to receive, Some are to preach, and Some are to hear, Some are to lead, and Others to follow, but under all the Exercises unto which we are called in the

House

Houſe of God, theſe are the Things to be perſued; for it is of univerſal Concern, without Exception; and is not this a ſtrong Reaſon why every one ſhould follow the ſame? Again,

2. Every one is capable of being ſubſervient to this Purpoſe, he is paſſively ſo; for who is ſo perfect as not to admit of further Increaſe: Yea; or of being profited by the leaſt of his Brethren? He is actively ſo; for there is no indifferent Member in a Church, who is ſo inconſiderable as that he may not by his Sloth, murmuring, talebearing, or ſome evil Conduct, break the public Peace, and ſtumble his Brother; or, on the other hand, by an humble faithful orderly and affectionate Behaviour be a Means of promoting Harmony and mutual Edification? It is in the ſpiritual as in the natural Body, the leaſt Member may in ſome Degree obſtruct or promote the Life and Pleaſure of the whole, and of every Part. And further,

3. You are each accountable for his Deportment towards the other. Thus in the Context; * *we ſhall all ſtand before the Judgment-ſeat of Chriſt; every one of us ſhall give Account of himſelf to God*; let no Man, therefore, grieve or ſtumble his Brother. Wo be to the Man who proudly diſturbs the Peace of the Church, or deſpiſeth his Brethren; but bleſſed is he who denieth himſelf

* Ver. 10, 12.

himſelf for the Sake of the Choſen, in Meekneſs and Love, when the Redeemer ſhall appear to acknowledge what the Righteous have done one for another, as done unto himſelf! Moreover,

4. The Pleaſure to be found in this bleſſed Perſuit may juſtly excite our Zeal in this Service. 'Tis true; Mortification is needful, in Proportion to which it is grievous to the Fleſh, as the Chriſtian himſelf may experience; but nothing is more pleaſant to the renewed Mind, conſtrained by the Love of God, and in the Proſpect of Life everlaſting than to carry on the Work of the Lord and to build up his People. † *Therefore*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *I endure all Things for the Elect's Sake, that they may alſo obtain Salvation which is in Chriſt Jeſus, with eternal Glory.* In this Perſuit the ſpiritually minded rejoice, while they, who being ſordid and carnal, are ſeeking their own, cannot taſte the inexpreſſible Delight and Satisfaction of Heart that is felt in being an Inſtrument of furthering the Peace and the Faith of the Saints. And again,

5. The Example of Chriſt hath already been hinted. He followed the Things which make for Peace thro' the Courſe of his Life, and humbling himſelf to the Death of the Croſs, made

† 2 Tim. ii. 10.
‡ Ver. 18.

made Peace by his Blood, that he might build up the Temple of the Lord, and compleat the Salvation of his People. And ſhall not every Diſciple follow his Steps; or, to uſe the Words of the Apoſtle, "Let this Mind be in him, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus?" Finally,

5. It is a Work truly honourable in the Sight both of God and of Man. ‡ *For he that in theſe Things ſerveth Chriſt, is acceptable to God, and approved of Man.* Theſe Conſiderations may ſuffice to quicken your Endeavor after the Things which make for Peace, and wherewith one may edify another. It is every one's Buſineſs; you are each in ſome Degree capable of it, and muſt ſtrictly give an Account of your Conduct. There is a ſingular Pleaſure found in the delightful Perſuit, it correſponds with Chriſt Jeſus's Example, and it is highly well pleaſing to God and Men; to all which may be added, as hinted already, that Recompence of Reward at the Appearance and Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. That Perſon who cannot be animated by ſuch Motives, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?

And now, my Brethren, from what hath been ſaid, may we not juſtly admire the tranſcendent Excellency of that ſacred Fellowſhip which the Faithful have in Chriſt

‡ Ver. 18.

Jeſus? What other Kind of Society on Earth is founded on ſuch noble, ſo diſintereſted Principles? Is it not truly divine? And, ſhould not this commend it to the Practice of them that fear God? If indeed you are the Diſciples of Chriſt, wherefore, my Friends, are you ſo backward to build up his Houſe?

It is true, no Perſon enters with a good Underſtanding into this Goſpel-Communion, ſo much for himſelf as for others, and it requires great Humility, Self-Denial, Vigilance, and Care, to be an honorable and uſeful Member of the Church; but can this be an Objection, or have you any Reaſon to fear the Grace of the Lord in your Obedience to him?

I might go on to obſerve how ſhameful is the indolent Profeſſor, much more he that is contentious and quarrelſome, and continually giving Offence to his Brethren! The Lord preſerve you from ſuch bitter Roots! But 'tis Time to diſmiſs you; yet, Beloved, permit me to add one Caution more. Remember, while you are following theſe Things, to have your Eyes continually up, for the Aids of the Spirit, without whoſe efficacious Influences you cannot ſucceed; conſider that * except the Lord build the Houſe, however diligent or ſkilful, they labour in vain that build it. But, be aſſured that,

* Pſalm cxxvii. ver 1.

that, if conſtrained by the Love of God, your Hearts are ſet on this Work, *your Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.*

To conclude; who will not join in ardently wiſhing that this beautiful Spirit and Conduct might univerſally prevail. O that in every Church of the living God, each Member preſſed forwards to this glorious Mark! Let us who are called to be Guides, with holy Courage lead on the Van: Let us not only in our Diſcourſes and Inſtructions to the Flocks we preſide, but likewiſe in our Conduct towards each other, ſhew them the Way, that having us for an Enſample, the People that follow may not fail, by this golden Rule, to go on to Perfection; and, O that the ſame noble Perſuit may be conſpicuous in all the Congregation of the Saints in their Communion together! So ſhall Peace be within our Walls, and Proſperity within our Palaces! And, in one Word; how great the Encouragement for every one thus to ſeek the Welfare of Zion; for they indeed who hate Zion, ſhall be as the Graſs on the Houſe-tops, which witherеth before it groweth up, and ſhall be confounded; but they who love her SHALL CERTAINLY PROSPER.

4 1 67